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TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 7141
ARAB ISRAELI COLLECTIVE PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BEIRUT 001935

PARIS FOR OFRIEL, LONDON FOR GOLDRICH

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SUBJECT: ANTI-ISRAELI AND ANTI-U.S. RHETORIC ON THE
RISE

CLASSIFIED BY CHARGE DAVID HALE. REASON 1.5 B&D

1. (C) SUMMARY. LAST WEEK'S UPSURGE IN VIOLENCE IN ISRAEL DREW WIDESPREAD CONDEMNATION FROM GOL OFFICIALS, THE MEDIA, HIZBALLAH, AND MUSLIM LEADERS. THE JULY 31 ATTACK AT NABLUS INTENSIFIED ANTI-ISRAELI RHETORIC, WHILE SPARKING CRITICISM OF THE U.S. HIZBALLAH CONDEMNED THE ISRAELI ATTACKS AND CALLED UPON ARAB STATES TO USE ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL PRESSURE TO FORCE THE U.S. TO CHANGE ITS REGIONAL POLICY. LEBANON'S MOST PROMINENT SUNNI RELIGIOUS LEADER CALLED UPON THE ISLAMIC WORLD TO SUPPORT THE PALESTINIANS WHILE WAGING JIHAD TO PROTECT THE HOLY SITES IN JERUSALEM. FORCED TO WATCH THE INTIFADA FROM THE SIDELINES, LEBANON'S PALESTINIANS VENTED THEIR FRUSTRATIONS THROUGH A WEEK-LONG SERIES OF MARCHES AND RALLIES IN REFUGEE CAMPS ACROSS THE COUNTRY. THE AL-AQSA MARTYRS BRIGADE, A RADICAL OFFSHOOT OF FATAH, WARNED OF ATTACKS AGAINST ISRAELI AND U.S. TARGETS. END SUMMARY.

2. (C) GOVERNMENT SPEAKS UP. KNOWN FOR EXPRESSING ONLY THE MOST PERFUNCTORY SUPPORT FOR THE PALESTINIAN CAUSE, THE LEBANESE GOVERNMENT FELT COMPELLED TO SPEAK OUT AFTER LAST WEEK'S VIOLENCE IN JERUSALEM, THE WEST BANK, AND GAZA. IN WHAT WAS FOR HIM A RARE PUBLIC EXPRESSION ON THE MATTER, PM HARIRI KICKED OFF THE WAVE OF GOL CRITICISM, CALLING ISRAEL'S JULY 29 "ASSAULT" ON THE AL-AQSA MOSQUE "AN ATTEMPT TO EXPUNGE THE ARAB AND ISLAMIC IDENTITY" FROM THE SITE. RETURNING TO A MORE MUTED TONE, PM HARIRI RESPONDED TO THE JULY 31 ATTACK IN NABLUS BY WARNING, "THE FLOW OF BLOOD IS ABOUT TO THREATEN THE WHOLE REGION," AND CALLED ON THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY TO STOP THE MASSACRE OF PALESTINIANS.

3. (U) SPEAKER/AMAL LEADER NABIH BERRI DELIVERED A HARSHER DENUNCIATION, CALLING THE ISRAELI ACTION "THE HIGHEST LEVEL OF STATE TERRORISM." SEEKING TO BOLSTER AMALQS POSITION IN THE UPCOMING MUNICIPAL ELECTIONS IN THE SOUTH, BERRI TOOK A SWIPE AT THE U.S., POINTEDLY NOTING THAT THE ISRAELIS "USED THE MOST SOPHISTICATED AMERICAN WEAPONS." ALONE OF THE TROIKA, PRESIDENT LAHOUD MADE NO COMMENT ON THE NABLUS ATTACK.

4. (U) HIZBALLAH LASHES OUT AT U.S. HIZBALLAH RESPONDED TO THE UPSURGE IN VIOLENCE WITH A VOLLEY OF SUPPORT FOR THE PALESTINIANS. CALLING THE DEFENSE OF JERUSALEM "A SACRED RESPONSIBILITY OF EVERY MUSLIM AND ARAB," HIZBALLAH ARRANGED MARCHES AND PROTESTS ALONG THE LEBANON-ISRAEL BORDER TO PRESS THEIR PONT HOME. AFTER THE NABLUS KILLINGS, HOWEVER, HIZBALLAH LAUNCHED A FIERY ASSAULT AGAINST THE BUSH ADMINISTRATION, CLAIMING IT BEARS "DIRECT RESPONSIBILITY" FOR THE KILLINGS "THROUGH THE SUPPORT IT EXTENDS TO THE ZIONIST ENTITY, AND THE JUSTIFICATION IT PROVIDES FOR THEIR CRIMES." ALTHOUGH ACKNOWLEDGING SECRETARY POWELL'S CRITICISM OF ISRAEL'S POLICY OF TARGETED KILLINGS, SHIA CLERIC HUSAYN FADLALLAH IMPLIED THAT U.S. CONCERN WAS NOT GENUINE BECAUSE "U.S. VICE PRESIDENT DICK CHENEY DESCRIBED THE MASSACRES AS SELF DEFENSE BY THE ISRAELIS... AND PRESIDENT GEORGE BUSH CALLED FOR SELF-RESTRAINT AS IF THE PALESTINIANS WERE EQUALLY THE SOURCE OF THE VIOLENCE." REITERATING HIS

CALL FOR AN ECONOMIC BOYCOTT ON THE U.S., FADLALLAH ALSO CALLED UPON THE ARABS TO "EXERT PRSSURE ON AMERICAN TROOPS IN THE GULF TO MAKE WASHINGTON CONCERNED ABOUT ITS POLICIES AND INTERESTS IN THE ARAB AND MUSLIM WORLDS."

15. (U) PUNDITS ALSO BLAME US, EXPECT WIDER CONFLICT. CRITICIZING THE NABLUS ATTACK AS A "BLOODY MASSACRE" MANY LEBANESE NEWSPAPERS CARRIED GRUESOME CLOSE-UP PHOTOS OF THE CHILDREN KILLED IN THE ISRAELI OPERATION. ALTHOUGH THE SECRETARY'S CRITICISM OF THE ATTACK DREW FRONT-PAGE COVERAGE, EDITORIALISTS TENDED TO BLAME THE U.S. FOR WHAT THEY SEE AS A WORSENING CRISIS. IN AN EDITORIAL ENTITLED, "THE REGION IS ABOUT TO EXPLODE" PRO-LAHOUD DAILY, AL-BAYRAQ WROTE, "SHARON WILL BE SATISFIED WITH HIS JOB AS LONG AS HE RECEIVES AMERICAQS BLESSING... THE ATMOSPHERE OF WAR IS GETTING HEAVIER AND... SHARON IS PUSHING THE REGION TOWARDS THE ABYSS... HOWEVER, ONLY WASHINGTON IS RESPONSIBLE FOR THIS SITUATION."

16. (U) SUNNIS JOIN THE FRAY. AS THE WEEK DREW TO A CLOSE, THE HIGHEST-RANKING SUNNI FIGURE IN LEBANON, GRAND MUFTI SHAYKH MOHAMED RASHID QABBANI, ADDRESSED A GROUP OF 500 DEMONSTRATORS TO GARNER SUPPORT FOR THE PALESTINIANS. DEPICTING THE CURRENT VIOLENCE AS A FIGHT FOR CONTROL OF MUSLIM SITES, QABBANI CALLED UPON ALL MUSLIMS TO JOIN THE JIHAD AGAINST ISRAEL BECAUSE IT "INTENDS TO DESTROY THE AL-AQSA MOSQUE IN ORDER TO BUILD ITS ALLEGED TEMPLE ON TOP OF IT." QABBANI PROMISED THAT "WHEN THE TIME COMES, WE WILL JOIN YOU IN UPROOTING THE ISRAELI STATE. WHEN THAT DAY COMES, NEITHER THEIR HELICOPTERS, NOR THEIR FLEETS NOR SUPPORTING POWERS WILL BE ABLE TO SAVE THEM."

17. (U) PALESTINIAN PROTESTS. PALESTINIANS IN LEBANON STAGED A SERIES OF PROTESTS AND SIT-INS THROUGHOUT THE WEEK. THE OCCUPANTS OF THE AYN AL-HELWEH CAMP STAGED THE LARGEST DEMONSTRATION ON AUGUST 1, WITH NEARLY 5,000 REFUGEES -- SOME 100 OF THEM REPORTEDLY ARMED -- TAKING TO THE STREETS OF THE CAMP. THEY CHANTED DEATH THREATS TO SHARON, BURNT ISRAELI AND AMERICAN FLAGS, AND CARRIED BANNERS THREATENING TO "LIQUIDATE" PALESTINIAN COLLABORATORS. SMALLER DEMONSTRATIONS WERE HELD IN SHATILA, BADDAWI AND RASHIDIYEH CAMPS, WHERE PROTESTORS CALLED FOR AN ESCALATION OF THE INTIFADA AND DEMANDED THAT THE ARAB STATES FULFILL THEIR COMMITMENTS TO THE PALESTINIANS.

18. (U) RADICALS THREATEN THE U.S. THE AL-AQSA MARTYRS BRIGADE, A RADICAL OFF-SHOOT OF FATAH, DELIVERED A LETTER TO THE AFP OFFICES IN BEIRUT ON AUGUST 1 CLAIMING THEIR "FIGHTERS' WEAPONS WOULD BE POINTED TOWARDS TARGETS INSIDE THE ZIONIST ENTITY AND IN ALL PLACES WHERE ITS AMERICAN ALLIES ARE." THE GROUP PROMISED TO INFLICT A "BLOODY INTERNATIONAL PUNISHMENT ON PRESIDENT BUSH'S ZIONIST CLIQUE TO MAKE IT PAY FOR ITS SUPPORT TO SHARON."

19. (C) COMMENT: WHILE SUPPORT FOR THE PALESTINIANS REMAINS (AT BEST) LETHARGIC IN LEBANON, PUBLIC SYMPATHY FOR THE PALESTINIAN CAUSE IS ON THE RISE GIVEN THE PAST WEEK'S ENDLESS STREAMS OF MEDIA COVERAGE DEPICTING THE VICTIMS OF ISRAELI ROCKET, TANK AND SHOOTING ATTACKS. CONFLICT AT AL-AQSA ALSO HITS A POPULAR CHORD IN THE MUSLIM COMMUNITY, RALLYING POLITICIANS AND RELIGIOUS FIGURES TO TAKE A STRONG PUBLIC STAND -- OR RISK BEING LEFT BEHIND.

HALE